

SOUTH AFRICA:
A Land Divided Against Itself.

By Z.K. Matthews.

IN recent years the spotlight of world publicity has been focused increasingly upon the Union of South Africa. Apart from the attention the country has attracted in the world press, and in such international forums as the United Nations, there has been a steady stream of books, articles in popular and learned journals, and reports by visitors to the country - all in an endeavor to get the measure of the problems confronting that deeply troubled society.

These problems do not result from any lack of generosity on the part of nature. The Union of South Africa, with an area about one-sixth the size of the United States, has a healthy climate, with no very great extremes of heat and cold, and relative freedom from such pests as the mosquito and the tsetse fly and the diseases that have earned for some parts of Africa the name "the white man's grave.". In fact, an African humorist has pointed out that South Africa could more correctly be described as "the white man's gravy." Although not a very rich country agriculturally - according to experts only fifteen percent of the land is good for agriculture - it has vast natural resources of minerals - gold, diamonds, coal, iron ore, manganese, etc - and the man-made mountains of earth around the Golden City of Johannesburg contain uranium. With the rapid industrialisation that has been stimulated by, among other things, two world wars and the ever-present threat of a third, South African manufacturing industries are making an increasing contribution to the national income and to international trade. Its expanding economy and high standard of living (in comparison with neighbouring territories) have made it a center of attraction to Africans from all parts of South, East, and Central Africa, as well as to the whites, who have been going there to live since 1652. Only the anti-immigration policy of the Union Government, especially since 1948, has prevented the stream of white immigrants from broadening. With the Suez Canal a bone of contention between Egypt and the United Kingdom, the old sea route to the East via the Cape of Good Hope has acquired a new importance, giving the Union of South Africa a significant place in global military strategy. Why is it that a country with such advantages seems unable to evolve a social, economic, and political system that provides adequate safeguards for the legitimate aspirations of all its people?

In order to appreciate the basic issues involved in the South African situation,

one must bear in mind the multiracial character of the population and in particular the relative proportions of the racial groups represented there. The population of the Union is generally divided into four main categories: European (white), African, Asian and Colored (mixed). The Europeans number approximately two and a half million, the Africans eight and a half million, the Coloreds just over one million, and the Asians (mainly Indians but including some Chinese) about 350,000. The Europeans have been established in the area since 1652; the Africans are indigenous inhabitants of the country; the Asians originally came as indentured labourers about the middle of the nineteenth century, on the express invitation of the government of the Colony of Natal, now one of the States or Provinces of the Union of South Africa; the Coloreds are the result of miscegnation between black and white, although they include a group of Malays (about 60,000) originally brought into the country as slaves from the East when the Cape Colony was still under the jurisdiction of the Dutch East India Company.

Not only do these groups differ in numbers and in racial stock, but they vary also in cultural background, in the languages they speak, and in the level of their development in terms of modern Western civilization. The crux of the South African problem lies in the fact that these groups, which are all determined to make South Africa their permanent home and have lived together in the country so long that their interests have become inextricably interwoven, have not yet found a satisfactory basis on which they can be welded into a united nation with common ideals and common loyalties. There have been repeated efforts to find a solution to the racial problem. Commissions of experts have studied the issues involved and made recommendations to South African governments. Parliamentary select committees have heard voluminous evidence. Innumerable individual studies have been made and various schemes have been tried in the search for a political system which would safeguard the rights of all sections of the population. Yet all these efforts have thus far proved abortive. In fact, far from moving in the direction of a solution of its major problems, the country in recent years has tended to move in the direction of an intensification of the stresses and strains that are turning South Africa into a land divided against itself.

Usually the question of group relations in South Africa today is considered almost exclusively as a study in relations between black and white, but this is an oversimplification of the problem. The white population itself does not constitute

constitute a homogeneous group.. Of the two and a half million whites, one and a half million speak a language akin to Dutch, called Afrikaans; one million speak English; and some of the bitterest conflicts in South African history have been between these two groups. The Afrikaans-speaking section of the population, whose ancestors first settled at the Cape in 1652(1652), consider that they have a better claim to the country than the English-speaking section, whose forebears took over the Cape Colony from Holland in 1806.

It was the dissatisfaction of the Dutch element with British colonial policy that led a considerable number of them to embark upon the Great Trek of 1836, when they left the Cape for the interior, where they later established independent republics with a policy, especially as far as black-white relations were concerned, fundamentally different from the equalitarian policy of nineteenth-century Britain. The period from 1854, when the independence of the Boer Republics was recognised by Great Britain, to 1902, when the Republic^s again became British colonies, was marked by a series of clashes between English and Dutch for supremacy. Even with the Boer War (which the Dutch refer to as the Second War of Independence) the struggle did not end. The Boer Rebellion of 1914, the dispute over the South African national flag (the Dutch did not wish to recognise the hated Union Jack), the insistence upon bilingualism and upon having two capitals (English Cape Town being the legislative and Dutch Pretoria the administrative capital) and upon having two national anthems ("God Save the King" and "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika"), the struggle for dominion status, and the clash over South Africa's entry into the Second World War - all these highly controversial issues either actually or nearly led to armed conflict between white and white.

To this day the British imperial factor is a ghost never absent from South African politics. Although South Africa has attained dominion status, i.e. has become a sovereign independent state within the British Commonwealth of Nations, the Afrikaans-speaking whites are not enamoured of the British connection. As Prime Minister Dr. F.D. Malan pointed out in a recent interview ~~on~~ ~~the~~ with a representative of the New York "Times," the idea of recovering the republican independence lost in 1902 and seceding from the British Commonwealth is a Boer ideal which has lost none of its attraction through the passage of time. "A very considerable number of people alive today took part in the struggle for republicanism and independence," he told the interviewer, "and thousands died for it".

On the other hand, in some English circles this hankering after a republican form

of government and secession from the Commonwealth is looked upon as a sinister move designed to deprive them of their rights in a land for which their forebears also made great sacrifices. This is the reason they have fought so strenuously, both inside and outside the Union Parliament, against the recent attempt of the Malan Government to disregard the rule requiring a two-thirds majority for altering certain clauses in the South African Constitution. In the disregard of this rule they see a threat to their linguistic equality and other rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The now celebrated decisions handed down by the Supreme Court of South Africa upholding the two-thirds majority rule averted that threat, but only temporarily. In the campaign preceding the election of last April, Dr. Malan's National Party promised to strip the Supreme Court of its power to pass on the constitutionality of legislation. How this is to be done has not yet been divulged, but the promise remains.

But whatever their political differences, both English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans are agreed that the greatest problem confronting them is the "Swart Gevaar", the black menace. The feeling that the whites should have a uniform policy for dealing with the nonwhite problem was probably the principal reason that the Union was formed in 1910. The Union as finally consummated was a union of whites in face of what they considered a common danger, the black problem.

Both before and since Union the search for a suitable social and political system for multiracial South Africa has proceeded along two main lines: that of separation (apartheid) or segregation, and that of integration and cooperation. Although the policy of apartheid has in recent years attracted the more attention both inside and outside the Union and commands widespread support among the dominant whites there, it has found opponents among them as well as among the nonwhites. The white opponents of apartheid have not been so vociferous in expressing their opinions or so determined in working for their translation into action as the nonwhites, but they have not been entirely lacking. Moreover, the white advocates of a policy of integration and cooperation have come from both the Afrikaans-speaking and the English-speaking sections of the white population. Any adequate history of racial liberalism in South Africa would have to include the names of men like Senator F.S. Malan and the Hon. J.H. Hofmeyr alongside names like Sir James Rose-Innes, J.X. Merriman, and W.P. Schreiner. Although these men have believed that the Western form of civilization has to be preserved in South Africa, they have not thought that this necessarily implied the denial of political,

economic, or social rights to the nonwhite groups. When the law depriving Africans of their right to vote on the common roll was passed by a Joint Session of the white Union Parliament in 1936, eleven members had the courage to register their vote against the principle of separate communal representation. Like their fellow white citizens, they believed in what they called white leadership of the South African nation, but did not subscribe to the view that this leadership should be based exclusively or primarily on considerations of pigmentation or on the so-called innate superiority of the white man.

In short, the separationists have not had things entirely their own way. There is a sense, in fact, in which the fury of the separationist attack upon the rights of the nonwhites has been directly proportional to the extent of their realization that the hard facts of the South African situation run counter to their own prepossessions and in favour of the often unexpressed or ill-defended views of their opponents, both white and black.

Nor is there complete unanimity among the advocates of apartheid. It is true that the separationists who at present control the government of the country are agreed that South Africa is or ought to be a "white man's country" and are striving to build up a political, economic, and social structure that will insure the permanent supremacy of the white in national, provincial (state), and local life. But there are at least three main schools of thought among the advocates of apartheid: the theological, the anthropological or cultural, and the political.

The theological school is represented by certain of the Dutch Reformed Churches, which maintain that God created people of different racial stocks and that these differences should be reflected in the national life of the country by different arrangements for the various racial stocks. In the view of this school, the integration of peoples of different racial stocks into one undifferentiated society is contrary to the will of God, and in the South African context, in justice to both black and white and in conformity with God's will, the correct policy would be one of total separation of black and white into a sort of "Eurostan" and "Bantustan." Such a plan bears little relation to the facts of the South African economy, where the use of nonwhite labour in white-dominated industries is essential. It is only fair to say that there are leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church like Professor B.B. Keet of Stellenbosch University who do not subscribe to the view that apartheid can be justified on Scriptural grounds and have not hesitated to

express the view that "it is opposed to everything for which the evangelical message, both in the New and the Old Testament, stands." (See Eugene P. Dvorin's "Racial Separation in South Africa.") *Reels' "Whither South Africa"*

The anthropological school is to be found in intellectual circles in universities, where apartheid can be discussed in an academic, if pseudoscientific manner. There it is regarded as a method of enabling each racial group to preserve its own volksgeist and to develop along its own lines, such lines being unilaterally determined for all groups by the self-appointed white trustees of them all. The adherents of this school of thought are sometimes referred to by their opponents as those who believe in each racial group's stewing in its own juice as long as this does not deprive them of their cheap nonwhite servants.

Finally, there is the proponent of apartheid that deserves the most serious consideration: the hard-boiled politician who recognises the policy for what it really is - a practical method of achieving the maximum amount of separation without sacrificing the benefits to be derived from the exploitation of cheap native labour by white agriculture and white industry. In other words, for the politician the policy is frankly and openly advocated and applied as the most effective technique by which the baasskap (boss-ship) of the ^white man can be maintained on a permanent basis. The politicians are satisfied to leave to the academicians the task of giving an intellectual flavor to the policy and to the theologians that of providing a nonsecular basis for it. For them the bread-and-butter aspects of the problem are of more immediate concern. Of course, even the politicians make attempts to rationalize the policy by arguing that it is calculated to preserve white civilization (with the emphasis on the white rather than on the civilization) or designed to protect the African against the "evils of detribalization." Any policy that seeks to recognise and give practical effect to the interdependence of black and white and to integrate them into one society on the basis of their common interests and their mutual contribution to the welfare of the country is represented as a betrayal not only of the white man but also of the African, as a "slave-policy, because under it the Africans can never live their life to the full; it tears them away from their own folk, uproots them from the soil out of which they have sprung, severs the roots of their tribal tradition."

From time to time white political leaders suggest that the nonwhite problem,

especially the so-called "native problem" should be removed from the arena of party politics and dealt with as a purely administrative problem on a nonparty or bipartisan basis. In other words: why weaken our position vis-a-vis the nonwhites by quarreling among ourselves? But as Mrs. V.M.L. Ballinger, the most brilliant South African woman parliamentarian has warned, there is no easy way - certainly no realistic way - by which the African problem can be removed from the tangled skein of South African politics: "All Union politics are native affairs."

On the other hand, the nonwhites do not themselves represent a united or uniform group. The Africans are divided into a number of tribal units with variations in usages and customs and patterns of behaviour, and they speak a variety of languages belonging to the Bantu language-family but not mutually intelligible to the ordinary speakers. This has not lightened the task of those seeking to weld them into a unified whole. In some respects the greatest cohesive factors among the Africans have been the common oppression to which they have been subjected by the European and the common resentment they feel at having been drawn, often against their wishes and with little regard to the concerns of their own social systems, into the vortex of Western civilization.

The Indians constitute another separate nonwhite community. Until recently they have not regarded it as either necessary or expedient to make common cause with the Africans in their struggle for better rights in the land of their adoption. Although over 80% of them were born in South Africa and have never been to Asia, some of them have tended to pin their faith on India as the protector of their rights.

Again, the Coloreds - persons of mixed descent, the result of miscegenation between black and white - have long cherished the fond hope that they would eventually be assimilated by the white groups, at least as far as their rights were concerned. They have been encouraged in this belief by those leaders who wanted to keep the nonwhites from forming a solid front. For instance, in 1925 the late General Hertzog dangled before them his Colored Persons' Rights Bill, which purported to be designed to give Coloreds equality with the white man. Of course it never reached the statute book. Dr. D.F. Malan once gave the impression that he believed in the eventual enfranchisement of Colored women. The hopes of Indians and Coloreds for preferential treatment did not seem entirely groundless so long as they enjoyed certain privileges or advantages over Africans, such as freedom from the pass laws, or better economic and employment opportunities. It is only now with the gradual unfolding of the apartheid

policy of the present government that they have begun to realize that the only effective distinction in South Africa is that drawn between white and nonwhite and that if they are ultimately to achieve equality of status with the whites they will have to make common cause with the Africans, who constitute the yardstick by which the rights of all nonwhites are measured.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the formation of a united front among nonwhites has not run a smooth course. Even oppressed people do not find it easy to change attitudes of mind and patterns of behaviour developed over a long period of time, although the more farsighted among them may appreciate the fact that their long-term interests demand such a change. Nonwhite leaders who see the necessity for a united front are faced with the task of overcoming the effects of the official policy of "divide and rule". Although they are not always agreed as to the best method of achieving this objective, all thinking nonwhites realise that, set over against the dangers presented by the policy of white supremacy, the minor differences between them become insignificant. Consequently, from time to time efforts have been made by leaders from the different nonwhite groups to bring about unity among their followers on the basis of the common oppression to which they are subject, but these efforts have not yet achieved complete success, although the movement in that direction is much stronger today than it has ever been before.

The formation of such a united front among nonwhites has always been viewed with disfavour by the Government; for obvious reasons it prefers to deal with the various groups separately. Thus separate schools, separate residential areas, separate housing schemes, separate wage scales, separate employment opportunities, separate social security benefits, and so on, have been set up for the different nonwhite groups. Where it has been considered necessary to establish special official organs to give nonwhites a voice in matters affecting their welfare as substitutes for direct representation in governing bodies, separate organs have been set up for the different nonwhite groups. There are, for instance, the Native Representative Council for Africans, the Colored Advisory Council for Coloreds, and the Asiatic Land Tenure Board for Asians. Similarly, when separate parliamentary representation for nonwhites has been established they have not been grouped together in the same constituencies or electoral districts as the whites, but have been divided into separate groups with separate electoral areas in the same states or provinces under different statutes - the Natives Representation Act of 1936, giving Africans in the Cape Province three white representatives; the

Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act of 1946, giving the Indians three white representatives (since abolished); and the Separate Representation of Voters Act of 1951, giving the Coloreds four white representatives (since declared invalid by the Supreme Court of South Africa in the famous decision already referred to).

On the local level the same policy of "divide and rule" has been applied. Thus local or district or regional Councils in the rural areas and Advisory Boards in the urban areas have been established for Africans, but not for Indians or Coloreds.

The white man in South Africa has used and is using the political power of which he at present enjoys a virtual monopoly to give practical effect to his view of life. Under the apartheid policy - which, incidentally, Dr. Malan and his followers did not initiate but have merely carried to its logical conclusion - nonwhites are denied the right to be represented in the councils of state, whether on the national, the provincial or the local level; in the economic sphere fair employment practices are rejected and economic inequalities are justified on the basis of what is known as the "civilized labour policy." This means that nonwhites are excluded from certain classes of ^{skilled} work and that administrative measures are employed to replace nonwhites by whites even in the lower grades of the public services. Thus, between March, 1949, and March, 1950, a group of 1,696 Africans in national or provincial jobs were replaced by 1,290 Europeans and 400 Cape Coloreds, at an additional cost of approximately £226,000.

In the social sphere there is apartheid in transport, in public offices, in residential areas, in hospitals, in schools, in churches, and in cemeteries, always with the proviso of inferior (and often quite inadequate) services for the nonwhite. Recently, when the Supreme Court handed down a decision to the effect that where separate facilities are provided for the different racial groups such facilities must be substantially the same, the reaction of the advocates of apartheid was immediate. From the Prime Minister downwards they lost no time in pointing out that the doctrine of "separate but equal" is not part of the traditional policy of South Africa; on the contrary, they declared, the avowed doctrine is "separate and unequal."

In the field of education, while the state assumes full responsibility for the education of white children, it leaves the education of nonwhites largely to the Christian missions, with some provision for state aid. In 1949 when the state expenditure was £50 per white pupil, it was £16 per Coloreds and Asian pupil, and £7 per African pupil. Provisions for the health of whites compare favourably with those in other civilized countries, but health services for nonwhites are far from adequate, especially in the rural areas.

In short, the policy of separation, far from leading to an equalization of opportunity and services for all sections of the population - to the "something better" always vaguely promised by the separationists - has resulted in lopsided development: the maximized satisfactions of one section of the population and the progressive depression of the status of other sections, including the loss of rights formerly enjoyed in some states or provinces.

For many years the nonwhites have endeavoured to fight for the amelioration of their lot and the removal of the disabilities under which they labour by the usual democratic methods of persuasion and discussion. They have formed political, social and industrial organisation or associations of many kinds, and through them have made representations to the powers-that-be for the redress of this or that grievance. They have cooperated with South African governments in various official bodies especially set up for the ventilation of their views on matters affecting their welfare (as substitutes for direct representation in the councils of state). But these efforts have proved of little or no avail in stemming the tide of racial discrimination. Frustrated and disillusioned, the nonwhites finally launched a non-violent resistance campaign on June 26, 1952. Known as the "Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws," and directed solely against laws based on racial discrimination, it has been sponsored by the African National Congress, a body established in 1912 as a mouthpiece of the African people in political matters.

In launching this campaign the African National Congress invited all organisations and all individuals, whatever their race or colour, to join. The Indians under the leadership of the South African Indian Congress, and to a lesser extent the Coloreds, have identified themselves with the campaign. Last December the first group of white persons to identify themselves with the campaign went into action under the leadership of Patrick Duncan, the son of a former Governor-General of the Union. Both Duncan and Manilal Gandhi, a son of Mahatma Gandhi, were promptly arrested. Since the beginning of the campaign more than 8000 volunteers, including the top-flight leaders of the movement, have been arrested and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment with hard labour, while the younger volunteers have occasionally been punished by flogging. None of the men and women arrested have offered resistance to the treatment they have received, for when they volunteer they take a pledge to observe the principles of nonviolence and to suffer for the cause. All volunteers are expected to undergo a period of training and to observe the code of discipline, which is based on moral and religious principles.

Attempts have been made to characterize the movement as Communist-inspired, thus playing into the hands of the Communists by the implication that they are the only people who ever inspire movements for freedom. The African people started to fight for their freedom as soon as they made contact with the European, and the present struggle is simply a continuation of that process. For this reason they are not unduly perturbed by allegations of Communism in the present phase of that fight.

Another allegation is that the movement is led by educated nonwhite agitators who hanker after equality with the white man instead of going to the backward areas of the country ~~for~~ to work for the betterment of their less fortunate brethren. Educated Africans make no apology for being the vanguard of the movement for the liberation of their people. They would hardly be worthy of the education they have received if they did not seek to extend to their fellow countrymen some of the benefits that others derive from living in their homeland. In all societies, including white South African society, it is those who can see a little further than their neighbours who take the lead in recruiting others to a fight for necessary reforms.

It has also been suggested that this movement is sponsored by Indians who are teaching Africans the nonviolent passive resistance technique that Mahatma Gandhi taught them. It is perhaps not without significance to recall that the Mahatma first applied this form of struggle in South Africa; however, as one who has been closely associated with the inner circles of the African National Congress throughout the period of preparation for this campaign, I know that full responsibility for it must be laid on the shoulders of the African National Congress, which has taken the initiative throughout. Naturally the Africans welcome the support of Asians and others who are common sufferers with them under the yoke of racial discrimination. Far too long has the policy of "divide and rule" kept apart people who should make common cause against a common foe.

Finally, the question is sometimes asked if this movement is not inspired by a purely negative hatred of the white man. When people have been subjected to the humiliations and ⁱⁿ dignities that are the lot of the black man in South Africa, it would not be surprising if there were some among them who succumbed to antiwhitism, just as so many whites have succumbed to antiblackism. Racial discrimination is not a soil in which love of one's neighbour can best be expected to thrive. And yet the leaders of the movement have emphasized again and again that they are fighting not against the white man as such but against the injustices and the inequalities that are searing the souls of black and white alike.

It is still too early to attempt to assess the long-term results of this campaign, but certain preliminary observations about the reactions of various groups may not be out of place.

There can be no doubt that the campaign has succeeded in arousing the political consciousness of the nonwhite people as never before. There is a tremendous awakening among them and a fresh realization of the strength that comes from united action. The self-control and discipline the volunteers have shown in spite of extreme provocation, especially in the jails where they have been imprisoned, have demonstrated their appreciation of the principles of nonviolence. Frustrated by ruthless oppression and unbearable conditions, nonwhites from all walks of life are rallying to the call of their national organizations.

The campaign has succeeded in drawing to the attention of the ruling whites in South Africa the grievances of the nonwhite groups. Those who are politically conscious realize that the Defiance Campaign is perhaps the only bulwark of democratic struggle in the country and as such has been supported. The dignified manner in which the struggle has been conducted has been appreciated and has proved to many that the non-Europeans are capable of effective organization and are highly conscious of their plight. Farseeing men and women among the whites have been confronted with serious questions. Individuals have brought forward forcibly the question of the relationships between the whites and the nonwhites. They realize that if the rapidly widening gulf between them is not bridged, it will do incalculable harm to the future of the country. The campaign has provided a challenge to the Christian conscience, and dignitaries of the most important churches are pressing from pulpit and platform for the resolution of the impasse between non-Europeans and the Government. The Civil Rights League, the Institute of Race Relations, the Torch Commando, and similar organisations have called for consultation between representatives of the Government and the leaders of the nonwhite groups.

Probably the greatest tribute to the effectiveness of the campaign is the fury of the Government's reaction to it. At first skeptical about whether it would command mass support, the Government later resorted to measures intended to stamp it out with the ^{ut-}most severity. The imposing of severe penalties, the arrest of more and more of the leaders, the banning of meetings of more than ten persons, restrictions on the movements of leaders - all these did not serve to halt the

movement. The Union Parliament has passed a law empowering the Government to suspend by proclamation i.e. without reference to the legislature, "any act of Parliament or any other law having any bearing on any purpose for which the regulations may be made." This power, which purports to be designed to enable the Government to deal with threats to public safety or public order, could, of course, be employed to stifle any criticism or any protests against any law.

That the nonwhite groups remain undaunted by these totalitarian acts is indicated by their quiet confidence and the determined manner in which they are working for the next stage in the campaign. As one leader has observed: "We have a programme to meet the fascist challenge, and we are possessed of the ideals and objectives which place us politically and morally far ahead of all other political groups in South Africa. We believe that . . . we will be ready to meet any threat from the government. We are creating a grass-roots organisation and a mass leadership which cannot be defeated." Freedom-loving peoples everywhere will watch developments in South Africa with deep concern for those who are endeavouring to keep alive in that "mistaken land" as it has been described, the struggle for human rights and fundamental freedoms.